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Gives in 1862
David H. Miller

Mr. David H. Miller, of Georgetown, Connecticut, whose portrait and fac-simile autograph appear above, was the major of the Twenty-third Connecticut Volunteer Infantry; and he is now (1908) the President of the Regimental Association.

IN THE LOWLANDS OF LOUISIANA IN 1863

An Address Delivered By

REV. ANDREW M. SHERMAN

At the Forty-second Annual Reunion of the
Twenty-third Conn. Regimental Association

HELD AT

Steeplechase Island, Bridgeport, Connecticut

On Thursday, August 20, 1908

[Published by Request]

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257

The Howard Publishing Company
Morristown, N. J.

1894

The "Jerseyman" Press



Morristown, N. J.

147

In the Lowlands of Louisiana in 1863.

MR. PRESIDENT AND COMRADES :

It is a great pleasure to me to meet with you again ; to look once more into your faces, and to again have the opportunity of renewing acquaintance with old and tried friends of days long gone by.

I sincerely regret that I have not met with you more frequently in the years past ; but I hope to be able, in future, to meet with you a few times more, at least.

On the 11th of February last, it was my privilege to deliver, in connection with a series of public entertainments given under the auspices of the Post of the Grand Army of the Republic of which I have the honor of being the Commander, an Address on "In the Lowlands of Louisiana in 1863."

Through the courtesy of our beloved President, I am to repeat that Address on the present occasion.

It has seemed best to me, all things considered, not to make any material alterations in the construction of the Address as delivered before my Post, and its guests ; but to give it to you, substantially, in its original form.

You will notice, as I proceed, that with few exceptions, I have omitted mention of names of Comrades of our regiment ; but I am certain that most of you, at least, will experience no difficulty in inferring the names of Comrades referred to in the various incidents and episodes related.

In the treatment of the subject in hand, I shall, of course, be able only to touch here and there.

On the evening of the 19th of April, 1861, only five days, as you will note, after the assault on Fort Sumter, a war meeting was held in the thriving manufacturing village in New Haven County, Connecticut, of which I was then a resident. I was at

the time sixteen years of age, and on the 5th of the following month I would be seventeen.

At that war meeting, held in the largest hall in the village, there were nearly a thousand persons present, the hall being packed from platform to vestibule, inclusive of both ; and some, indeed, were sitting or standing on the long flight of stairs leading from the street up to the hall.

Ringed resolutions of allegiance to the government at Washington were unanimously adopted ; patriotic speeches were made, the echoes of which I can almost hear, after the lapse of nearly half a century ; a liberal sum of money for war purposes was pledged, and this was increased on the following day, and an enlistment paper was opened for recruits for a company, to proceed in due course, with its regiment, to the seat of hostilities in the South.

Without stopping to consider the matter of my age, I went to the platform, and boldly affixed my signature to the enlistment paper. One of my older brothers, who had also signed the roll, quietly whispered a few words in the ear of the Chairman of the meeting, and, presto ! my name was promptly erased from the list of recruits.

Upon ascertaining the action of the Chairman of the meeting, I immediately mounted the deep casing of one of the large windows, and gave expression to my keen disappointment at not being permitted to enlist, in what was my maiden patriotic speech.

Before the war meeting closed, nearly an entire company of recruits had volunteered for service in the gathering Union army.

The company was duly organized and officered, and, bearing with it the hearty Godspeeds of the people, it proceeded to the seat of war with the regiment to which it had been assigned—the Second Connecticut Volunteer Infantry ; and with this regiment, it participated in the first battle of Bull Run.

Although, by reason of my insufficient age, I had not been permitted to be among the first troops from my resident State to engage in the Civil War, I waited, not always patiently, I have to confess, for the arrival of the time when the age consideration

would, in my case, be obliterated, and I too, could don the Union blue.

Meanwhile I read with increasing avidity the daily newspapers, and in that way kept myself well informed concerning the movements of the Union and Confederate armies in their various and widespread fields of operation.

As might have been expected, this omniverous reading of the daily press only fanned into a brighter flame the ardent desire of my heart to become, as soon as possible, a part of the Union forces then struggling for the preservation of national unity.

How well do I remember, Mr. President and Comrades, as if it was only yesterday, the intense excitement with which the very atmosphere of the north was charged, in those early days of the Civil War!

How vivid is my recollection of the elation of the people at home, in the "Nutmeg State," over the successes of the Union forces; and of the awful depression following the reverses suffered by our armies, which in the opening months of the war were so frequent, and at times, so appalling!

Many times during those anxious days I was almost impelled to enter the service, regardless of my insufficient age and of the entreaties of my friends.

Chafing, however, like a three year-old-colt in harness, I remained at home until I could honorably, and with the approval of my friends, become one of Lincoln's boys in blue.

On the 5th of May, 1862, I was eighteen years of age; and, in the month of July following, I enlisted, and was duly assigned to Company F of a so-called nine months regiment—the Twenty-third Connecticut Volunteer Infantry. I say a "so-called nine months regiment," because this regiment was in the service an entire year.

Among the memories of our sojourn at Camp Terry, in New Haven, Connecticut, situated a mile or more southward from the green, are the daily drillings of the awkward squads, the echoes of the "left!" "right!" "left!" "right!" of which I can still hear; the horror of our discovery, in the first bean soup served us by the company cook, of what we verily believed were tiny,

creeping animals, but which were really only the eyes of the nutritious white bean, which subsequently became one of the mainstays of the boys in blue ; the company and regimental parades, often witnessed by our sweethearts and friends ; the frequent runnings of the camp guard, chiefly down near the water's edge, and the clandestine visits to the city, where the boys could see something more of life than most of them were accustomed to ; the scarcely less hazardous returns to camp at unseasonable hours of the night, and the extreme difficulty of evading the none-too-vigilant guard and reaching our tents without discovery and arrest ; the comforts and luxuries brought into camp from home by loving hands, by which our new outdoor life was made more tolerable ; the difficulty with which the boys were induced to put out the lights, and cease their not always musical chattering, at the nightly sounding of " taps," and, the gradual discipline under which the regiment was brought by its, for the most part, considerate and capable officers, many of whom had for several years been actively identified with the efficient State militia.

On the 17th of November, 1862, the Twenty-third regiment broke camp at New Haven, and with about 850 officers and men, took the steamboat " Elm City " for New York.

We landed at Williamsburg, and from thence marched to the Centerville Racecourse, in Jamaica, a distance of about ten miles. Here we pitched our tents on the racecourse grounds.

At this point, named Camp Buckingham, in honor of Connecticut's splendid war governor, General Banks, according to common report, was assembling the troops for an expedition southward, the destination of which, however, was unknown, except in Washington.

At Camp Buckingham there were five nine months Connecticut regiments rendezvoused—the Twenty-third, Twenty-fourth, Twenty-fifth, Twenty-sixth and Twenty-eighth.

On the Centerville Racecourse we first experienced the rigors of camp life in cold weather ; and there was plenty of grumbling, I assure you. A single specimen of the grumbling indulged in by the boys is given in the following extract from a letter written home :

"The excessive dirt in the food, and the excessive moisture in the lodging, form frequent subjects of complaints. All experience has shown that sleeping, or trying to sleep, in three inches of water, in the midst of November, is not conducive to good health, temper, or morals."

Less than a month ago, I found, in the pigeon-holes over my study desk at home, a letter, written with lead pencil, some portions of which are now so faint as to require the use of a strong magnifying glass to read and decipher them; indeed, one line is almost entirely obliterated from frequent folding of the sheet. And little wonder; for this letter, the original of which I have with me to-day, was written forty-six years ago. There is the letter; it was written to "my best girl," the girl, who, for more than forty years has nobly shared with me the responsibilities and trials and disappointments and pleasures of life, and who is to-day alive, to cheer my declining years.

I would read the entire letter to you, Comrades, but for the peculiarly personal character of some portions of it; I will, however, read to you excerpts from the letter:

"Camp Buckingham, Jamaica, N. Y., November 18 (1862).
Once more I take pencil in hand to write you a letter. * * *
About 8 o'clock (on the morning of the 17th) I got my canteen and haversack, and we received orders to prepare to move. We struck our tent in the forenoon about eleven or twelve o'clock, and after waiting round we were called into line about two o'clock. (Here occurs the almost obliterated line, of which I have spoken) and then we started for the boat, and arrived about three o'clock, I think. After staying, or waiting about an hour and a half we went aboard the boat. There was a great rushing for the berths, and I finally got a good bed. * * * *
* * * I ate my supper and retired * * * ,
and slept well. Some of the boys sat up all night playing cards. We stopped once in the night, and in the morning I found that it was at Hell Gate. I rose in the morning at half-past five and ate some breakfast, then I went on deck and found the boat had stopped between New York and Brooklyn. We turned about and then started for Williamsburg. The Orderly called us into line to march us off the boat and then we started for the shore. Co.

F. was the second to come off the boat. We marched up the street a long way to give room for the other companies that were behind us. We sat on the stoops and fences, and some went into the houses and got their breakfasts ; others got coffee. The ladies threw out apples from the windows, and then there was a scrabbling. I did not try to get any, for I had some in my haversack. We stopped three times, and each time the boys were treated to coffee. We had our breakfast, given, I suppose, by the city authorities. Finally we got started, and after we had gone about three miles it commenced to rain a little. * * *

We rested four times on our march. It is ten miles from the boat to this camp. It is probably the longest march we shall have with our knapsacks ; some of the companies had them carried on trucks. By the time we reached the camp ground it rained hard, and when we got into line the captain took us to the place where our tents were to be pitched. In all the rain we put up our tent, and by the time we got through the mud was three inches deep. I never saw such a mudhole ! We got some straw and put into our tent ; but the water was running into the tent. I went about a quarter of a mile and got two bundles of cornstalks to lie on. Toward evening I went to a tavern near by with several of the boys to get dry, but we remained only a short time. I went to bed at half-past six, for I felt sick. * * *

I was very sick in the night. * * * My feet were soaking wet, and are wet now. I am on guard to-day, but there being another corporal on with me I shall not do much. There are four regiments in this camp, the 23d, 25th and 26th Connecticut Volunteers, and the 141st New York, Germans. We are encamped on the Centerville Racecourse. Our tent is more like a hog pen than like a tent, but we must endure it now. * * *

To-day is quite pleasant. * * * Accept this from
 Yours truly, A. M. Sherman. P. S.— * * *

Write soon and direct your letter to A. M. Sherman, Centerville Racecourse, Jamaica, N. Y., 23d Regt. Ct. Vols., Co. F."

Among the incidents of our brief sojourn at Camp Buckingham, was the receipt, on the day before Thanksgiving, of a good-sized wooden box, from two sisters residing in the vicinity of Boston, filled with delicacies. When the box was started from

its donors it contained, as I could but infer from general appearances, sandwiches, buttered biscuits, cake, cookies, crullers, mince pies, cheese and fruit. When I opened the box in camp, I found to my great surprise and disappointment, a most strange admixture of all the articles mentioned. It was, indeed, a box of mush, from which I was able to pick a few only of the various articles so tenderly placed by willing hands in the box at its place of departure. It was not until several years afterward that I informed my sisters of the decidedly mixed condition of the Thanksgiving delicacies sent me at Camp Buckingham.

On the 30th of November, 1862, the Twenty-third and Twenty-eighth Regiments of Connecticut Volunteers broke camp at the Centerville Racecourse, and marched buoyantly down Atlantic Avenue, Brooklyn, to the East River. Here, seven companies of the Twenty-third and seven companies of the Twenty-eighth, about a thousand men in all, embarked on the steamer "Che-Kiang," or, in our language, the "Sea-King."

Whither we were going none of us certainly knew; it was whispered among the boys that we were to form a part of the military expedition to be commanded by General Banks, and that was our only clew.

Company F of the Twenty-third Connecticut Volunteers, of which I was a member, was among the troops that embarked on the "Che-Kiang" on that bleak, cold day in November, 1862.

Barring the usual seasickness, the first few days of the voyage to the southward were pleasant, and to most of the boys the novelty of being on the great, blue ocean was fascinating; but on the 5th of December, when off Cape Hatteras, a terrific storm burst upon the "Che-Kiang." "The vessel,"—I now quote the words of another—"with its freight of a thousand men, refused to obey the helm, and wallowed helplessly in the trough of the sea, shivering under the mountainous waves; while flash after flash of lurid lightning revealed the terrors of the situation."

Men trembled who never trembled before; men knelt in fervent prayer on the sea-washed decks of the "Che-Kiang" who had not, perhaps, prayed since the innocent days of "Now I lay me down to sleep"; and many whose lives had been far from exem-

plary vowed future obedience, if only the storm would abate and the imperiled vessel reach her destination in safety.

Alas ! how few of those solemn vows were remembered, or, if remembered, were performed.

The "Che-Kiang," with her precious human freight, weathered the storm ; and after an uneventful voyage of a few days touched at the Tortugas, at the southwestern extremity of Florida.

From the Tortugas the steamer made a quick passage through the placid waters of the Gulf of Mexico, with its myriad of porpoises, which seemed to be rolling round and round in the blue waters like so many wheels, but which were simply coming to the surface of the water, showing for a moment a small portion of the back, and then suddenly disappearing. To men unaccustomed to the sight it was one of extraordinary interest.

At Ship Island, in the northern part of the Gulf of Mexico, the men on the "Che-Kiang" disembarked. Here they remained long enough to recover somewhat from the effects of their rough sea voyage.

The following description of Ship Island, written home by the Rev. Richard Wheatley, chaplain of the Twenty-eighth Connecticut, will convey some idea of it :

" This low sandbank is the creation of the restless Mexican Gulf. It boasts but little vegetation. A few grasses, cacti, flowering herbs and shrubs, and some stunted pines, exhaust the list. Nor is the fauna more extensive than the flora. A dilapidated cow and an untimely calf, some splendid horses and refractory mules, ugly alligators, venomous spiders and spiteful mosquitos would chiefly claim the attention of the naturalist. The encircling waves swarm with fish."

Re-embarking on board steamer, the men of the Twenty-third and Twenty-eighth Connecticut proceeded by way of the Mississippi River to New Orleans.

It was on the 17th of December, 1862, that these two regiments pitched their tents at Camp Parapet, which was one of the outer defences of the Crescent City, on the north. Here they drilled and performed camp-guard duty.

One of the peculiarities of Camp Parapet, situated on the bank of the swiftly-flowing Mississippi River, was the great sud-

denness with which thunder storms came up in the summer time. To illustrate this, it may be said that if a soldier was only a short distance away from camp, and the usual signs of a storm made their appearance in the heavens, he would have to do some tall hustling to get back to the shelter of his tent before the rain would begin to come down in torrents, and perhaps drench him to the skin. Many a soldier did get such a drenching, before he became accustomed to the ways of the region as regards thunder storms.

On the 14th of January, 1863, the seven companies of the Twenty-third Connecticut which had taken passage on the "Che Kiang," in command of the colonel of the regiment, crossed the Mississippi River to Algiers, where they took the cars on what was then the Opelousas and Great Western Railroad to Brashear City, distant about ninety miles almost due west from New Orleans.

The Twenty-third Connecticut was expected to join General Weitzel in an attack on the Confederate gunboat "J. A. Cotton," up the Teche; but for some reason they did not do so.

Brashear City is situated on an island formed by Lake Chenimache, Bayou Bœuf and the Atchafalaya River. During the Civil War it was a village containing perhaps thirty or forty buildings of all kinds. The population could not have been to exceed 600 in its most prosperous days.

This place with its high-sounding name had been General Banks' depot of supplies for his entire army, and a large quantity of military stores had been gathered there. In an immense frame building which stood on the shore of Berwick Bay a million and a half dollars' worth of Government stores, so it was said, had been piled.

When the bulk of General Banks' troops went to Port Hudson to take part in the now famous siege of that Confederate stronghold, the officers of many of the regiments which were to engage in the siege left their personal baggage in an old sugar mill in the lower part of the village. The private soldiers, also—some of them, at least—left their knapsacks at Brashear City, in one of the old sugar mills. This private and government property must, of course be faithfully guarded, and protected from capture

of the Conference was to study cases of Chinese immigrants.

The first facts were given by the speaker. This was the first time that a speaker had ever been invited to speak at the Conference. The speaker was the first to be invited to speak at the Conference.

On the day of March 1913, the first conference was held at the home of the speaker. The speaker was the first to be invited to speak at the Conference.

The following were the first to be invited to speak at the Conference. The first to be invited to speak at the Conference was the speaker.

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" Monday, Jan. 12th.—Went to bed after supper last night, and got up this morning feeling rather badly, but was all right before night.

" Tuesday, Jan. 13th.—Took a walk on the quarter-deck this morning: saw groups of cypress-trees and sea oaks, as well as some flights of birds. All quiet during the day.

" Wednesday, Jan. 14th.—Was awakened very early this morning by a harsh, rattling sound, which I expected was the grating of the ship's keel on the sand. Shortly afterwards a heavy shock that fairly shook the ship from stem to stern. It shook me out on deck in double-quick time, and as I was putting on my clothing, Master Miller rushed in and says: 'My God! we have struck on the rocks!'

" I went out on deck—everything was in confusion. Anxious looks and scared visages met you at every turn, hurrying about the deck: the captain very anxious and excited, bellowed to the carpenter to sound the pumps. Carpenter shouted: 'Four and a half feet of water, sir!'

" 'Oh, Lord! the ship is lost!' exclaimed the captain.

" All this while the ship was bumping on the rocks: planks started from the bottom and floated off, and the water was gaining in the hold all the time.

" We soon saw an island in the distance, and I felt more easy in my mind: the prospect of a long voyage in an open boat, crowded with men, or perhaps making our way to land with only the help of a spar or plank over rough breakers, was not all a pleasing prospect.

" At about nine and a half o'clock the boats were lowered, and all ready for the men to embark: and after every man had left the ship, Lieutenant Stevens and myself embarked and reached the shore in safety, taking nothing but our blankets but the rest of our goods were brought off by the crew the next day.

" Our passage to the shore was a perilous one. I expected every minute to strike on the reefs, which came almost out of the water. The breakers were passed with much difficulty, and we finally arrived at the shore. When within about fifty feet the boat struck a rock, staying in her side and filling the boat with water. We then threw ourselves into the water and were washed

to the shore. I tell you I felt thankful when my feet were planted on the coral rocks, which the island is composed of !

“ Water and provision were the next things to look after. Three boats, after much trouble, brought off the most needed articles. In the afternoon a sail hove in sight. We hoisted a signal of distress ; she saw it and came for the island. We found her to be a wrecker from Green Turtle Key, about fifty miles distant from us. They informed us that water was at the other end of the island, about five miles distant ; so we moved up there and built houses of palm leaves and sticks. The weather is as hot here as it is in Connecticut in July and August.

* * * * *

“ Well, we had hard times on Stranger's Key, living on raw pork and hardtack, with very poor and brackish water. We were on the island eighteen days ; long enough to eat all the provisions we had saved with the help of the wreckers. * * * *

“ We made a dish of hardtack and pork, called ‘ scouse ’ ; traded pork with the negroes from Green Turtle Key for sweet potatoes and oranges. * * * *

“ I will now close with the promise that if my life is spared, I will write more particulars. Direct your letters to

“ LIEUT. J. W. BUCKINGHAM,

“ Co. I, 23d Regt. C. V.,

“ Gen. Banks' Expedition.”

Companies A, H, and I rejoined the regiment at Brashear City on the 11th of January. The occasion was made one of rejoicing.

At Brashear City the Twenty-third Connecticut remained, performing guard duty, until the 9th of February, when the regiment was ordered to strike tents and march to the railroad. The various companies were then distributed, as a guard along the whole length of the Opelousas and Great Western Railroad, from Berwick Bay to Jefferson, nearly opposite the Crescent City.

Headquarters were established at La Fourche Crossing, about 30 miles to the east of Brashear City.

The different companies of the regiment were posted as follows : Company E, Captain Lewis Northrop in command, at

Bayou Ramos. Company A, Captain Alfred ^{Wells} Mills, at Bayou Bœuf. Company K, Captain S. G. Bailey, at Tigerville. Company I, Captain W. H. May, at Terrebonne. Company B, Captain James H. Jenkins, at Bayou La Fourche. Company H, Captain A. D. Hopkins, at Raceland. Company C, Captain Julius Sanford, at Bayou des Allemands. Company F, Captain D. T. Johnson, at Boutte Station. Company G, Captain G. S. Crofut, at St. Charles, and Company D, Lieutenant S. M. Nichols, at Jefferson.

About the 1st of March Companies E and I were ordered to headquarters, and Company A to reinforce Captain Sanford at Bayou des Allemands. By the 1st of April, Company B was also transferred to Napoleonville, south of Donaldsonville, and Company A to Labadieville, still further south.

Boutte Station, to which Company F was ordered, was situated about 30 miles to the west of New Orleans, and was so designated because of the principal man of the settlement, a Mr. Boutte. Of the sojourn of Company F at Boutte Station I will now tell you something.

The station consisted of about a dozen buildings, all told. The former residence of Mr. Boutte was occupied by the captain and the other commissioned officers of our company. The men, for the most part occupied the other and smaller buildings; a few, however, living in tents.

I had very comfortable quarters in one of the smaller dwelling-houses; comfortable, that is to say, so far as the quarters were concerned. The mosquitoes, however, were so numerous and troublesome during the nights that the only way we could sleep at all was by inclosing our bunks with mosquito netting. The extreme closeness of the air in these netting-inclosed bunks, on a hot night in the summer time, can perhaps be imagined. I sometimes debated the question, in my mind, which was the greater evil, the mosquitoes or the stifling air of the inclosed bunks?

But the mosquitoes were not the only pests at Boutte Station; it was no uncommon thing for the boys to be awakened in the night by a slimy lizard crawling across the face or neck, or some other part of the body. Some of these lizards were said to

be poisonous, while others were considered harmless ; and after we boys had learned to distinguish the one from the other, the lizard problem was considerably simplified. Nevertheless, I very much prefer sleeping and living in a part of the country where lizards are unknown.

The chameleons of Louisiana, a species of lizard, I believe, were very interesting to the Yankee boys from the North ; and these chameleons abounded at Boutte Station. The boys often caught them, and watched them as they assumed the color of the object on which they were placed, a leaf or stick, perchance ; and more than one letter written home from camp contained a detailed account of these strange little reptiles and their ways.

But not by night only were the mosquitoes troublesome at Boutte Station : along toward evening, particularly, they were a veritable torment—so much so, indeed, that while on guard or picket after sunset, the boys had to completely inclose the face and neck in mosquito netting. It really seemed to me some evenings that I should be eaten alive by these infernal insects, for, notwithstanding the netting, the mosquitoes were very active with their proboscides.

The recollection of my experience with mosquitoes while on guard in the evening is made the more vivid by the fact that one evening, when these insects were unusually troublesome, and while walking my beat with my musket in the most comfortable position possible, General Banks and one or two of his staff suddenly appeared. Upon being informed who it was that had so suddenly made their appearance, I at once brought my musket to a present arms, with an explanation of my seeming lack of respect for superior officers. Every word of my explanation was punctuated with a violent stroke of first one and then the other of my hands at the mosquitoes, which seemed to be taking a most contemptible advantage of my preoccupation with my distinguished visitors.

I shall never forget the remark of General Banks, as he watched me in my frantic efforts to defend myself from the ferocious assaults of the Louisiana mosquitoes :

“Never mind about presenting arms, my boy ; make yourself as comfortable as possible,” and with these words he and

his staff officers moved away, all the time, however, slapping right and left to escape being eaten alive by the busy insects swarming about them.

But mosquitoes and lizards were not by any means the only nor the largest pests we encountered in the "Lowlands of Louisiana"; alligators were plentiful, and sometimes not only troublesome, but dangerous. They were so silent in their movements, and their color seemed to blend so completely with the color of their environment, that usually, before one was aware of their presence, they would suddenly appear as though they had then and there sprang into existence. If an alligator's fast had not recently been broken, there was good reason for the boys to look well to their means of self-defense.

I distinctly remember that one day while on guard near an old, abandoned farm wagon a short distance from the camp (it was on the apology for a road leading to the Mississippi River), an alligator suddenly appeared in the roadway, having stealthily emerged from the near-by woods. It was the first alligator of any considerable dimensions I had seen in the South; and I am free to confess that I was not a little startled at the sight of the animal. He seemed to be coming straight for me, Andrew M. Sherman. As he half walked and half crawled toward me, he seemed a most hideous object. I discharged my musket. This, as I anticipated, brought several of the boys from camp with their muskets. It took them but a moment to grasp the situation; but it took a good deal longer than that for us to place that ugly alligator *hors du combat*. We fired bullet after bullet into the animal's seemingly impervious body; we beat him about the head with our musket stocks; we ran our bayonets into him; we pelted him with the biggest stones the region afforded, but these modes of attack were apparently ineffectual. At length, one of the more thoughtful of the boys sent a well-directed bullet into his savage eye and another into his gaping mouth, and our efforts were soon rewarded by seeing the huge animal slowly yield up the ghost. Of course, we had to measure him, and he measured from the tip of his tail to the tip of his nose about nine feet. His carcass was dragged off into the adjacent woods, and there left for future inspection by the incredulous.

I must say a word about the water we had to drink at Boutte Station. It was what was familiarly known as "tank water." As the name indicates, it was rainwater that had been caught in an immense wooden tank. Some of these tanks held several hundreds of gallons. This tank water, after standing for a few weeks, became so foul as to be unfit for a human being to drink; indeed, no Connecticut farmer would for a moment think of offering it to his cows to drink. And yet, we had to drink it, except we walked a distance of four miles to the Mississippi River, and enjoyed the luxury of a drink from the "Father of Waters." This we occasionally did; of which, more will be said. The tank water, which was of necessity our regular beverage, aside, of course, from coffee, after remaining in the wooden tank for a few weeks, became filled with what are sometimes termed "wrigglers" (this may not be the scientific name for them, but it is, however, a highly suggestive one), a tiny insect of remarkable rapidity of movement.

Once in a while the boys would climb up the side of the tank on a ladder or box, so as to look over the top into the water, and we would then strike with a stick or stone on the outside of the tank, and behold! the water would suddenly become alive with the wrigglers. It verily seemed as if there were millions of them. In a few moments the wrigglers would assume their usual place around the inner sides of the tank, and become entirely quiescent, until again disturbed by some curious Yankee soldier.

Although the water was drawn from a wooden faucet near the bottom of the tank, the water was almost invariably tepid and unwholesome; and the wonder is that the company were not prostrated with sickness of some sort during the nearly four months we were encamped at Boutte Station. You may be assured the boys did not drink any more of that foul water than they were absolutely obliged to; and if the entire company had taken to using whisky for a drink it would, it seems to me, have been perfectly justifiable under the circumstances. And I will not deny that some of the boys drank fully as much whisky as tank water.

To walk to the Mississippi River and get a drink from that

swift-flowing stream was considered a great treat ; and yet, when I tell you that the water we dipped from the " Father of Waters " was scarcely less unhealthful than the aforesaid tank water, you will doubtless wonder why we preferred it. The explanation is as follows : The Mississippi River, as you may be aware, runs at the rate of from seven to ten miles an hour ; one of the consequences of which is that the water is decidedly muddy. It is a red mud, and so full of red mud is the water, that if a cup is dipped from the river and permitted to stand for a short time, there can be seen at the bottom of the cup a thick, reddish sediment. Notwithstanding this, the boys drank the water from the Mississippi with great relish. Why ? Because it was comparatively cool, and because there were no nasty wrigglers in it. If the boys who drank this river water had thereafter " no sand," it certainly wasn't because the beverage was lacking in that essential ingredient of human character.

It is still a question in my mind, which of Lincoln's boys in blue faced the greater peril, those at Port Hudson and Vicksburg, or those doing duty in the lowlands of Louisiana (some portions of which are from six to ten feet below the surface of the Mississippi River), with its malarial atmosphere, its unwholesome water and its disease-imparting mosquitoes and poisonous reptiles.

Early on the morning of the 5th of May, the anniversary, by the way, of my nineteenth birthday, a squad of men from our company was detailed to cross the Mississippi River, for the purpose of dispersing a band of Confederate guerillas. I was not among the number at first detailed, but wishing for a little relief from the monotony of camp life, I asked and received permission to accompany the squad. Upon reaching the opposite side of the river, we learned that a number of slaves on one of the large plantations had risen and had threatened the life of their master, a reputed Union man, and that we had been sent over to quell the insurrection. This was somewhat mortifying to the boys who were itching for a scrap with the Confederates. The oral expressions of disappointment and chagrin were of such a character as to be scarcely proper for repetition in this presence.

The squad from Company F was in charge of one Lieutenant Brainard (so says a letter written home by me soon after the oc-

currence), of another regiment. After marching about a mile from the landing-place, making nearly five miles we had marched since leaving camp in the morning, we reached the plantation where the incipient insurrection was in progress. Lieutenant Brainard at once reported to the master whose slaves had risen, after which the squad was marched to the slaves' quarters, situated in the rear of the house, for the purpose of arresting the ringleaders. We found only three of the insurrectionists at their quarters, the others having disappeared on hearing of our approach.

Lieutenant Brainard immediately threw out a guard to prevent the rest of the slaves from leaving the plantation ; but despite his efforts, about forty of them escaped to the adjacent woods.

At about ten o'clock A. M. the guard was ordered in, and the entire squad spent the remainder of the forenoon under the comfortable shade of an old oak tree.

At twelve o'clock the entire squad was invited into the house to dinner ; and for the first time in several months I sat down to a table spread with a white cloth, and partook of an excellent dinner.

Dinner over, we all again sought the shelter of the oak tree, where we passed the afternoon, some in reading and others in lounging and sleeping.

After tea, another guard was posted. The mosquitoes were so troublesome that I got but little sleep during the night.

Next morning, after breakfast, having accomplished our mission, we started, with three slaves as prisoners, recrossed the Mississippi, and, at about eleven o'clock, reached camp at Boutte Station.

While Company F was encamped at Boutte Station, one of the members of our company and I were permitted to visit Bra-shear City—and I hold in my hand the pass given us by our company commander. I think you will be interested to hear it read :

" BOUTTE STATION, O. G. W. R. R.

" La., May 24th, 1863.

" Pass

" Mr. John Woodruff and Andrew Sherman from Boutte Station to Brashear City and return on the 26th.

" D. T. JOHNSON,

" Capt. of Comp. F, 23d Regt.,

" & Dept. P. M."

I have in my hand, also, two letters, written from Boutte Station; one is dated May 6, 1863, and the other is dated May 22, 1863. It is needless for me to remark that I prize these letters very highly; not alone for the interesting data they contain, but for the host of pleasant memories they revive—memories of a period of my life when the words of the poet following were marvelously true:

" Hope with a goodly prospect feeds the eye,
Shows from a rising ground possessions nigh,
Shortens the distance or o'erlooks it quite,
So easy 'tis to travel with the sight."

In the latter part of May, 1863, orders came to our company to prepare at once for removal to Brashear City; and at twelve o'clock on one Monday we boarded the cars, and at about five o'clock on the evening of the same day we were at our destination. In a few hours our tents were pitched, and our regimental camp was once more arranged.

The bulk of General Banks' troops were laying siege to Port Hudson; and in their absence, General "Dick" Taylor, a son of ex-President "Zack" Taylor, by the way, resolved to drive from western Louisiana the Union soldiers left there chiefly for guard duty. A small Union force was, therefore, concentrated at Brashear City to meet General Taylor, including a battery from Rhode Island; Colonel Holmes, of our regiment, was placed in command of the troops at that point. Three companies of our regiment were advantageously posted along the line of the railroad leading from the east into Brashear City. It was expected however, that the principal resistance to the Confederates would be made at Brashear City.

On the 1st of June, 1863, the Confederates attacked with a small force the hospital at Berwick City, another settlement with a high-sounding name, on the opposite side of a bay (Berwick Bay) about an eighth of a mile in width, which separates Brashear City and Berwick City. Company K of our regiment instantly embarked on a small steamer lying at the village wharf, and was soon followed by Companies G, I and C. This force, in command of Captain Crofut of Company G, advanced rapidly, and drove off the Confederates on the double-quick, afterward covering those who were engaged in removing the Union sick and wounded and the Government property.

Colonel Holmes was soon prostrated with sickness, and he was not again able to perform the duties of a soldier.

Lieutenant-Colonel Worden being ill, the command of the regiment then devolved upon Major Miller.

Lieutenant Colonel Stickney, of a Massachusetts regiment, now assumed the command at Brashear City.

Under the severe discipline of Lieutenant-Colonel Stickney our regiment knew no rest. Despite the warning given to the commanding officer, by Major Miller, that "Colonel Stickney, you are killing the men of my regiment!" the men at Brashear City were kept moving every day, and lay upon their arms almost every night, and the result was that in ten days half the entire number of soldiers at Brashear City were on the sick list.

On the 3d of June our company received orders to fall into line with guns and accoutrements. Because of the impaired physical condition of many of the men, Lieutenant Middlebrooks, who was in command of Company F (the captain being at the time provost marshal of Brashear City), announced that anyone who did not feel able to march could remain in camp; and some four or five fell out of the ranks. We then, in command of Lieutenant Middlebrooks, marched to the wharf in the village, where we took a small steamer across Berwick Bay to Berwick City. Companies H and K soon followed us across the bay.

Our forces further up the country had captured, a few days previously, a large number of cattle and horses, and they had been driven down to Berwick City for safekeeping. It hav-

ing been reported that the Confederates purposed attempting their recapture, we were sent across to foil the attempt.

Soon after crossing, we saw at some distance above Berwick City the Confederate force drawn up in line of battle, apparently awaiting attack from us. For some reason, perhaps the fear of our artillery on the Brashear City side, the Confederates did not attack us; and as the Union force was, as I remember it, much smaller than that of the enemy, our commanding officer deemed it the better part of valor not to bring on an engagement. So we contented ourselves with guarding the cattle and horses, and preventing their recapture by the needy Confederates. This we did by gathering them at the lower end of the village, under the cover of our guns on the Brashear City side.

Among the incidents of the day in Berwick City were the following: One of our men who ventured too near the Confederate lines, had a horse shot from under him; and several negroes who had accompanied the Union forces across the bay were killed by the enemy. The Confederates cherished a special dislike for negroes in any way affiliated with Yankee soldiers.

During our stay in Berwick City I procured a bridle, captured a horse, and rode bareback to my heart's content. In capturing the horse, I strayed upon the Confederates' picket line; and having left my musket with one of my comrades, and being, therefore, in a defenseless state, I had a narrow escape from capture. Some of the boys who had watched me said afterward they thought I was "a goner."

Peter Hughes—"Bishop Hughes," we used to call him—a jolly son of the Emerald Isle, who belonged to my company, wishing to have, as he expressed it, "a little fun," tied a red handkerchief to the end of his bayonet and audaciously waved it in the face of a big steer; whereupon the steer became infuriated and ran toward Hughes with evidently murderous intent. At all events, Hughes took to his heels, and barely escaped being gored to death by his four-legged pursuer. Hughes was thoroughly frightened. In subsequently relating the incident to the boys in camp, he invariably concluded with: "Och! begorra! but Oi'll niver flag a cow agin!" and I don't believe he ever did.

It was this same comrade who expressed himself so emphatically with regard to the quinine with which he was dosed in the hospital, whither he had been taken for some illness. The quinine must have been given him in large doses, with the usual ringing sensation in the head ; and it may have produced other unpleasant sensations, for after his return to the company, his displeasure found vigorous expression in the words : " D—n the the kenan ! D—n the kenan ! "

Another characteristic of Comrade Hughes, which clings like a thistle to my memory, was his inability to keep step in marching ; with the inevitable consequence that the comrade in front of him was not infrequently obliged to sing out : " Keep off my heels, will you ? "

I have in my hands, Mr. President and Comrades, a letter written to " my best girl " at home, containing a statement of many of the circumstances of the expedition across Berwick Bay, of which I have been speaking. The letter was written from " Brashear City, June 4, 1863, Eighty-six miles west of New Orleans."

You will notice that it is written on a sheet of paper containing one of the patriotic embellishments so common in " the sixties."

About the middle of June, 1863, Lieutenant-Colonel Stickney, having been informed that the Confederates were coming down the Bayou La Fourche, from the Plaquemine district, took all the men he thought could be spared from Brashear City, and moved down to La Fourche Crossing, about thirty miles to the eastward, toward New Orleans. Companies B and E of our regiment were already at La Fourche Crossing.

When our company was drawn up in line preparatory to starting for La Fourche Crossing, I fell in with the rest of the boys. Our commanding officer, Lieutenant Middlebrooks, upon seeing me in the ranks, said :

" Andrew, you can't go ; you're not able " ; and notwithstanding my reiterated wish to accompany the boys, I was not permitted to go to La Fourche Crossing.

The fact is, I was just out of the local hospital, and was very

much reduced in strength from the disease so prevalent among the boys in the lowlands of Louisiana. So I remained at Brashear City, with what result, we shall see.

Soon after the arrival of the reinforcements taken by Lieutenant-Colonel Stickney to La Fourche Crossing, the Union force there was attacked by the Confederate cavalry; but the enemy were repulsed after a sharp engagement.

At about 5 o'clock on the evening of June 21st, the Confederate infantry and artillery, in command of Gen. "Dick" Taylor, attacked our forces at La Fourche Crossing, the latter of whom were behind breastworks thrown up for the occasion. The Union forces were supported by several pieces of light artillery, planted just inside the breastworks. The Confederates, full of whisky and gunpowder (as was ascertained by an examination of their canteens left on the battlefield in front of the Union breastworks), which made them utterly regardless of life, came up to the very mouths of our cannon during the engagement, and, placing their hands upon them, demanded their surrender. The audacious Confederates were either shot down or bayoneted where they stood.

The engagement at La Fourche Crossing, which lasted about thirty minutes, was a hot one; and demonstrated the fact that Connecticut nine months troops could fight with honor to their State and country.

I have been told by comrades who took part in the fight at La Fourche Crossing, that on the following morning the Confederate dead and wounded were found in windrows on the field in front of our breastworks.

Our loss was comparatively small, owing, doubtless, to the fact that the Union troops were behind breastworks; but among the killed and wounded were some of the flower of the regiment.

Company F did not escape.

The comparative numerical weakness of the Union force forbade a pursuit of the enemy.

On the 22d of June the Confederates sent into our lines a flag of truce; and over a hundred of their dead and wounded were delivered up to them. We captured about fifty prisoners.

Of the engagement at La Fourche Crossing, we at Brashear City did not, of course, learn until some time afterward.

2. 1 On the 23d of June Lieutenant-Colonel Stickney, in pursuance of orders from headquarters, fell back with the forces under his immediate command, including the bulk of the Twenty-third Connecticut, on New Orleans, thus uncovering Brashear City.

The Twenty-third Connecticut were encamped in New Orleans until June 26th, when they were ordered to Camp Fair, Metairie Racecourse.

Let us now return to Brashear City.

5 At about 8 o'clock on the morning of June 23d the Confederates began throwing shell from Berwick City across the intervening bay into Brashear City ; but every shell went clear over our regimental camp and, so far as I am now able to recall, exploded in an open field in the rear, without injury to men or camp. In retrospect, those were most significant facts.

f It was great sport, as I distinctly recollect, for the boys, few of whom had ever witnessed such a sight, to watch the shells in their encircling aerial flight across the bay and as they exploded in our rear.

f This almost incessant shelling, which was kept up for two hours or more, was evidently, as we learned when it was too late to profit by the knowledge, done to divert the attention of the Union troops in Brashear City ; for during all this time a Confederate force was marching by a circuitous and extremely difficult route to attack us in the rear. To reach our rear the enemy had to get through a dense swamp, which had been considered impassable by the Union troops. This probably accounts for the fact that no Union pickets had been placed at that point, and the alert enemy, taking advantage of our neglect, got into our rear "as slick as a pin."

Major R. C. Anthony seems to have been in command at Brashear City on that fateful June morning in 1863.

1 At about 8 o'clock on the morning mentioned, the Confederates, consisting of about 800 men, mostly Texans, with a yell that made one's hair stand on end "like quills upon the fretful

porcupine," came rushing in from a piece of woods just back of the village upon a thoroughly surprised Union camp.

We had not to exceed 150 effective men at Brashear City, and of those only about fifty were formed in battle line in one of our company streets, the remainder being scattered about the village, some having been firing from behind rude breastworks on the shore of the bay, across the bay, into Berwick City. Others had been loitering about the village at different points—and all totally unprepared for attack.

The few men of the Twenty-third, under the command of two of our regimental captains, Jenkins and Crofut, after making a brief but heroic stand against the overwhelming Confederate force, were compelled to surrender.

I do not hesitate to declare that the pluck exhibited by those fifty men and their officers was of the highest character.

As the Confederates moved down toward the lower part of the village, they encountered some resistance from isolated squads of Union soldiers ; and in several instances individual Union soldiers stood and fired at the oncoming Confederates.

For example : While facing, in the vicinity of the local hospital, and heroically fighting two or three Confederate soldiers, Thomas C. Cornell, of Company D, fell, shot in the forehead. Later in the day, I saw the lifeless body of Comrade Cornell lying where he had fallen.

A member of Company F, Samuel Oulds, about eighteen years of age, a special chum of mine, who had just been discharged from the local hospital, was wounded in the arm while fighting single-handed, in Indian fashion, from behind a tree, as the Confederates came into the village. Comrade Oulds' arm was afterward amputated, in consequence of which he died seventeen days later, and his body now lies in Southern soil. He was as brave a soldier as ever wore the Union blue. Memorial Day never comes round but this comrade is uppermost in my thought.

I was at a considerable distance from the regimental camp when the Confederates came rushing into Brashear City with their unearthly yell. With others—I distinctly recollect "Sammy" Oulds of my company as having been one of them—I had been down on the shore of Berwick Bay, behind the rude earth-

works there constructed, firing across the bay at Confederates who had climbed on the housetops, evidently for the purpose of watching the movements of the Union troops on the Brashear City side. Among those on the housetops, as we subsequently learned, was one General Green. Our firing across the bay was not altogether ineffective, for I saw several heads duck after the discharge of our muskets, among them General Green's, as I was informed by a Confederate soldier, after the fight at Brashear City.

When I first saw the Confederates they were rushing in squads of fifteen or twenty men through the streets of the village, yelling and firing as they came. I was then entirely separated from my company comrades, and the few Union soldiers who were in sight were unknown to me. With a few of these unknown soldiers I started for the lower part of the village, our objective being, so far I can now recall, the big frame building on the shore of Berwick Bay. Here we could join a squad of the Twenty-fourth Massachusetts regiment, which had been performing special guard duty there.

It was while on our way to this building that, for the first time in my army life, I saw a Union soldier wounded. I shall never forget the scene! This soldier, whoever it may have been (and I have often wondered), was hit somewhere in the lower part of the body: with a shriek that I can now almost hear, he clapped both hands over his abdomen, bending nearly double as he did so. The wound was probably fatal.

The bullets were now flying all about me: they seemed to be coming from two or three directions, and it verily seemed as if every bullet was aimed at me, and that each particular bullet would hit me. This feeling, however, gradually wore off. Still, I prefer being in this place to facing Confederate bullets, as they flew about me with their "zip," "zip," on that June day forty-five years ago.

Instead of going into the big building for which, with others, I had started, I ran down the railroad track a short distance and climbed into an open freight car standing on the track.

From this car I fired for a few minutes at the onrushing Confederates. It was a strange sight to see the enemy rushing furi-

ously around the corners of the adjacent buildings, yelling as they came. Each one seemed to mean business.

The car into which I had climbed had been fitted up with wooden railroad sleepers on the sides and ends for reconnoitering purposes along the line of the railroad. These sleepers formed an excellent protection. In the car, when I reached it, were a few Union soldiers, and also a few negroes. I do not recollect whether these negroes were armed or not, but I do distinctly recollect that the Confederate fire was soon concentrated on this car; the bullets fairly rained against the side nearest the upper part of the village—evidently because of the presence of the negroes.

Tumbling at length to this fact, I concluded it was the better part of valor to change my base, which I did by slipping from the rear side of the car and falling into line with the squad of Massachusetts soldiers which had just emerged from the big building where they had been performing guard duty. To have remained in that freight car five minutes longer, would have been certain, and brutal, death to a white soldier; of that I was satisfied.

As the squad of Union soldiers were marching parallel to, and in the rear of the train of freight cars on the track, and as the sergeant in command, a large, fine-looking fellow, was passing the opening between two of the cars, a Confederate bullet hit him in the left arm.

The squad of Massachusetts men stood for a few minutes after coming out from behind the freight cars and fired at the Confederates; but they were soon overwhelmed, and we scattered to places of safety; each one looking out for himself.

I had fired all my ammunition and, seeing that it was all up with us, I threw my musket and empty cartridge box into a deep ditch just above the railroad track and started toward camp.

I was soon accosted by a Confederate major, who personally demanded my surrender; and as this seemed the only sensible thing to do under the circumstances, I readily acceded to the demand.

Seeing that I was without a musket, the officer inquired of me what had become of it, and upon being informed that I had

thrown it into the water, he manifested his appreciation of my thoughtfulness for Uncle Sam by a broad, good-natured smile.

As near as I can recollect, it was at about 11 o'clock in the day when the firing in the village ceased and the Confederates took possession; it may not, however, have been later than about 10 o'clock.

About 12 o'clock, the Union prisoners were marched up to a spot near where the Rhode Island battery had been stationed. Here, the Confederates gave us a few pounds of wheat flour; and this, so far as I observed, was the only food they gave us while were in their hands, notwithstanding they had captured enough hardtack, salt-horse and other rations to supply an army for several weeks.

Of the flour dealt out to us by the enemy we made what were termed "flapjacks," which I assure you were greatly enjoyed by hungry Union soldiers. The flapjacks were supplemented by a small quantity of coffee and sugar, which we were fortunate enough to have in our haversacks.

As for our knapsacks, the Confederates had captured them, and, indeed, everything else belonging to us except what we had on our backs. In my knapsack I had several letters which I had found in the garret of General "Dick" Taylor's house near the Mississippi River; some choice shells picked up on Ship Island. There must, also, have been other articles in my knapsack left in my tent, including, probably, a few love letters. Besides my extra clothing, there were in my tent several orangewood sticks for canes, which I had intended bringing home. I have often wondered what became of these articles, captured by the Confederates on that June morning.

From "The Twenty-third Regiment Connecticut Volunteer Infantry in the War of the Rebellion," I quote the following:

"The enemy, after the repulse at La Fourche, retreated down the railroad to Brashear, capturing small detachments guarding the different stations. Captain Julius Sandford, Company C, at Bayou Bœuf, finding it impossible to hold the place, fired the large sugar house in which was stored a large quantity of officers' baggage and regimental stores belonging to the troops

engaged before Port Hudson, to prevent them from falling into the hands of the enemy."

On the 25th and 26th of June the Union soldiers captured at Brashear City and at Bayou Bœuf were paroled. I have with me a duplicate of my parole. I prize it highly. I will read it :

"Headquarters C. S. Forces, South of Red River.

"Brashear City, La., June 25th, 1863.

"I, Private A. M. Sherman, Co. F 23d Regt. C. Vols., do solemnly swear and pledge this, my Parole of Honor, that I will not take up arms against the Confederate States, or their allies, nor in any manner whatsoever aid, assist, or abet the Government of the United States, during the existing war, until regularly and duly exchanged.

"A. M. SHERMAN.

"Attest : A. J. WATT, A. D. C.,

"C. S. A."

Across this parole duplicate are written the words : "Attest, R. C. Anthony, Maj. U. S. A., Cmdg," in the major's handwriting.

The parole also bears the signature of the Confederate aide-de-camp, as well as my own.

The commissioned officers captured at Brashear City and at Bayou Bœuf, were taken to Tyler, Texas, where they were kept as prisoners of war until July, 1864, a period of thirteen months.

It was a sad sight to see the officers—particularly of our own regiment—turn toward Texas and a Confederate prison ; but they deported themselves like men. The scene of the parting of the officers and privates on this occasion is ineffaceably impressed upon my memory. Of the faces of our officers about to start for Texas those of Captain Hopkins and Lieutenant Hurlburt ("Charlie" Hurlburt, as he was called when off duty) alone linger in my visual memory.

At the end of three days the captured Union soldiers started, under Confederate guard, for the Union lines, then at Algiers. When I tell you that fully nine-tenths of the Union prisoners were convalescents, but recently discharged from the hospital at Brashear City, you will not be surprised to hear that we were seven

days in marching a distance of about one hundred miles ; and that on that march, so enfeebled were most of the boys from recent illness that the line was several miles in length.

So far as I was able to observe, the Confederate guard were very considerate in their treatment of their prisoners ; which is accounted for, as I have always thought, by the fact that the guard was composed of Texans, whose ancestors were from the North and West.

I conversed very freely with several Confederate officers on the march toward the Union lines, about the war, its causes, its progress and its probable outcome. One officer, in particular, seemed to enjoy the boyish enthusiasm with which I conducted my side of the discussion.

Many incidents of great interest occurred on our march ; of these, I can now relate only a few.

For at least one-half the distance from Brashear City to Algiers we marched on the railroad, the general course of which was east and west. With the southern sun beating directly down upon us, and with dense forest on either side of the track, which shut out any air that may have been stirring, the heat on those June days was almost unbearable to men so recently out of the hospital.

I recall that on one afternoon during the march on the railroad I became so thoroughly exhausted from the heat and fatigue that, staggering down the embankment, and finding a comparatively dry spot, I lay down, with the feeling that I should not rise again : indeed, I did not care whether I ever rose again or not. I fell asleep. After an hour or more I was awakened by the Confederate rear guard, and, very much refreshed from my sleep, I resumed the march toward the Union lines.

On either side of the railroad on which we marched it was decidedly swampy, and there was an abundance of stagnant water, covered with a thick, green scum. This water the boys were sometimes obliged to drink to relieve their extreme thirst. Kneeling down on the ground, we would push aside the oft-times heavy scum and drink water, every mouthful of which contained poisonous matter.

Alligators were numerous all along the railroad, and some

were of such dimensions that we did not care, in our defenseless condition, to disturb them.

My chum, during most of the march, was "Pep" Short, a member of my company. On the march, the Confederates did not give us one morsel of food to eat; hence it was forage, or go hungry, and the latter we were disinclined to do. We had brought a little coffee and sugar with us from Brashear City, and occasionally stopping by the way we would build a little fire and boil some coffee in the familiar and indispensable tin can. A few ears of sweet corn plucked from an adjacent field and roasted over our coffee fire were considered a great treat by two hungry Union soldiers. That we had good teeth for eating sweet corn "off the cob" goes without saying.

As for blankets, neither "Pep" nor I had one; henceforth the Confederates would sleep under our gray blankets. I recall that on one night in particular our only coverings were the railings of the rude southern fence under which we bunked. The bare ground was, of course, our only bed. These things I mention, not as examples of the hardships we endured, but because of the ludicrous aspect of these incidents as I now look back on them from the standpoint of present comforts.

Tired from the long march, and almost famished after a prolonged fast, my chum and I came one evening to a plantation which had been abandoned by everyone except a few negroes. Entering a hut, we requested the occupants, a somewhat aged negro couple, to furnish us with some hoeecake and sweet potatoes, which they willingly did. The potatoes were baked in the ashes of the big fireplace and the hoeecake was cooked in the typical southern iron frying pan. That late supper, so far as our relish of it was concerned, could not be surpassed by the best course dinner ever served at Delmonico's.

In payment for that appetizing plantation supper I gave the negroes a five-dollar Confederate bill, which I had been sacredly keeping to bring home as a souvenir, and I received as change a two-dollar Confederate bill. This two-dollar bill I brought home and I have it among my modest collection of Civil War souvenirs. Inasmuch as the Confederates were so soon to reoccupy

that portion of the State, their money was readily accepted by the negroes who fed us.

On reaching Boutte Station my chum and I struck off into the country about half a mile, our objective being a house which we had frequently visited during our four months' sojourn at that place. The family, we discovered on reaching the house, were all gone and the doors were fastened.

We were two hungry soldiers ; we knew this family during our stay at Boutte Station to have been in sympathy with the Southern cause, hence our scruples were easily overcome. We broke open one of the doors, and entered and ransacked the house from cellar to garret in the hope of finding something to eat. All we found were two or three loaves of dry bread, covered with green mold ; we were not hungry enough to eat such rations. Continuing our search, we came across an old wooden chest, painted red. It took us but a few moments to go through that chest, and our search was rewarded by the discovery of what, upon due examination, proved to be two bottles of good whisky. "Pep" Short confiscated one bottle, and, more for the mischief of it than otherwise, I appropriated the other. We then resumed the march toward the Union lines.

Although I was not addicted to the use of strong drink in any form while in the army, I did, after our arrival at Algiers, use some of the confiscated Confederate whisky ; sharing it, however, with my old tent chum, whom I had not seen since the morning the bulk of Company F and the regiment went to La Fourche Crossing, where they helped to whip the Confederates so nicely. The bottle I brought home, and it was in use for several years before it was accidentally broken.

The first turtle soup I ever ate was in Algiers, during my short stay there ; and for that soup I paid, in greenbacks, two dollars per plate, and I was so hungry, after having boarded with the Confederates for about ten days, that I think I would have been willing to pay double that sum.

The paroled prisoners of the Twenty-third Connecticut were soon started for Ship Island, there to await exchange.

Concerning the regimental organization, the following extract from "The Twenty-third Regiment Connecticut Volunteer In-

fantry in the War of the Rebellion" will give us some information :

" July 1st, the regiment was in camp at Congo Square, New Orleans. July 4th, as an attempt to recapture the city of New Orleans was expected, the regiment, together with all the troops quartered there, was on duty patrolling the city. July 25th, the regiment was ordered to camp at Bonnet Carre."

I thank you, Mr. President and Comrades, for the opportunity of reviewing, with you, a portion of our experiences in the Lowlands of Louisiana in 1863.

ERRATA.

Page 15 (top line). For "Captain Alfred Mills," read Captain Alfred Wells.

Addenda

The two letters following may be of interest to the surviving members of the Twenty-third Connecticut, and perhaps to other soldiers from the "Nutmeg State" who served in the lowlands of Louisiana during the Civil War :

SHIP ISLAND, Gulf of Mexico,

July 28, 1863.

Dear _____ :

Yours of the 12th inst. was duly received. * *

* * When I tell you that this island on which we have been encamped since the first part of the month, consists almost entirely of fine, white sand, with scarcely a tree for shade or ornament, and with only here and there a patch of grass, you cannot doubt the propriety of applying the word "barren" to our present quarters. In this sand our tents are pitched, and on this sand, with a mere blanket for a bed, we lie, and sleep as best we can, with the various insects that minister to our (dis)comfort. Our shoes are never free from the irritating presence of this sand. You may find it difficult to believe me when I say that from 10.-30 A. M. till about 1.30 P. M. the sand is so hot from the sun's rays that an attempt on our part to walk in it with bare feet, as some of the acclimated natives do, will prove so painful as to deter one from a second attempt.

The comfortable nights which we invariably have offset, to a considerable degree, other inconveniences we suffer.

Every steamer that lands at the wharf is eagerly watched by the boys, in the oft-disappointed hope that it is the one to take us to the land of trees, and shrubbery, and grass, and to our regimental comrades who are strangely endeared to us.

We have picked up on the beaches of this island, in our wanderings here and there, quite a few pretty shells, and as the fighting days of the 23d are now passed, there is a good prospect of my getting some of them home for preservation, as reminders of our sojourn in the malarial lowlands of Louisiana, and especially of our encampment on this barren isle.

Our journey from New Orleans to Ship Island was an amusing as well as an exciting one. A portion of the journey lay through a narrow canal, and our conveyance was a small stern-wheel steamboat, which in the North would be a decided curiosity. The wheel by which these boats were propelled was at the rear end of the vessel, and resembled an overshot wheel, such as used to be seen in many of the old mills at the North "befo' de wah." The amusing part of our journey through the canal consisted of the frequency with which the steamer ran first against one side and then against the other of the narrow canal, sometimes nearly taking us off our feet with the short, sharp, abrupt manner in which the homely craft came to a standstill, and causing great hilarity among the boys, who, after a good rest, were overflowing with animal spirits. The banter of which the poor captain of the boat was the object, must have thoroughly tested his peppery Southern temper.

Soon after entering Lake Pontchartrain we made a brief landing and re-embarked on a sidewheel steamer, and after a delightful trip through the lake, with its picturesque surroundings, we reached Ship Island, the first sight of which was productive of no little merriment on the part of those who had not been there before.

The only circumstance to mar the enjoyment of our trip through Lake Ponchartrain was the incessant reports of the presence of Confederate guerillas along the shores, ready to fire into a comparatively defenseless transport, and perhaps send us to the bottom, with no chance for self-defense; but the guerrillas, for some reason, did not appear, and we went on our way unmolested. We were, however, kept on the *qui vive* every moment until we emerged in the broad waters of the Gulf of Mexico.

Many of the boys are making an effort to "kill time" with cards and checkers: others have suddenly blossomed into stud-

ents, and a book or periodical is their constant companion. I have re-read "Hamlet" and "The Lady of Lyons" with new pleasure, and have thus made more tolerable our life on this waste of nature. But already I have, I fear, exceeded the limits of acceptability ; so with kindest regards to Mrs. ———, and hoping that letter-writing between us may soon cease, I remain as ever,

Yours sincerely,

A. M. SHERMAN.

As I close my letter, a report is in circulation that we are soon to return to New Orleans, preparatory to being mustered out. I only hope it is true.

[The above letter must have been written early in the day, for at about nine o'clock in the evening of the 28th of July the paroled prisoners of our regiment had rejoined the regiment at Bonnet Carre, above the Crescent City.]

CAIRO, Ill., August 17, 1863.

Dear ——— :

After an exceedingly interesting trip of about ten days from Bonnet Carre, La., we arrived here to-day, and I hasten to write you, with the expectation that this letter will reach you some hours before the Twenty-third will reach Connecticut.

We left New Orleans on Tuesday, July 28th, the same day of our arrival from Ship Island, and reached Bonnet Carre about nine o'clock the same day.

On Sunday morning, August 9th, we left Bonnet Carre on the river steamer "Chamberville," and the ecstasy of the boys in realizing that their faces were turned homeward is indescribable.

On our way up the Mississippi we stopped several times : at Port Hudson, the scene of the never-to-be-forgotten "forlorn hope," on the 11th of August. Here we buried one of Company E's boys.

On the morning of the 13th we went ashore and buried in sadness, on the banks of the swiftly-flowing river, another of E's boys.

On the 14th we arrived at Vicksburg, where we spent a few hours in hastily inspecting the famous battleground, and where we buried one of Company B's boys. At Vicksburg we changed boats, going on board the "Albert Pierce."

On the 15th, after leaving Vicksburg, we threw overboard a negro, who had died on the boat.

We stopped for an hour or so at Helena, Ark., where I purchased some cheese at the rate of seventy-five cents per pound ; and more delicious cheese I never tasted.

One of our chief pleasures on the homeward trip was the fresh bread served out to the boys by the quartermaster at several different points where we stopped.

To say that the Mississippi River is crooked, is to convey a very inadequate idea of its tortuous course, which frequently renders it necessary to sail many miles to gain a short distance.

But our trip was not entirely pleasant. I cannot tell you

how many times our steamer, a stern-wheeler, ran against a huge snag in the river, forcing the steam from the boiler in great clouds, and producing, until we became accustomed to it, the greatest consternation among the boys, of whom there must have been nearly 1,000 on board, as portions of regiments other than the Twenty-third, came up the river with us. But the snags and the escaping steam were not our greatest annoyance by any means.

Along the western shore, at several points, small bodies of Confederate soldiers could be seen ; and the report coming to us at one of our landing-places that the Confederates had artillery and would fire into our boat, we were got in readiness to land and punish these audacious troublers. Several rifle balls were fired into our boat, but fortunately no one was hurt, and we did not land, although the boys were itching to do so.

Making a landing for a supply of wood for the boat, several of the boys assisted in loading, taking great sticks on their shoulders and running across the gang-plank with the agility of old salts.

As we approached Island No. 10 all eyes were wide open to get sight of this scene of so many thrilling naval exploits ; and how glad we were to set our feet on loyal soil at this place !

We expect soon to leave here on the cars for home. This is probably my last letter to you by mail; the next one, I hope to bring myself. Till then, good-bye.

Yours sincerely,

A. M. SHERMAN.

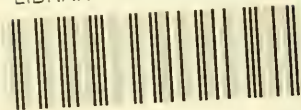


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